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The Descent of Christ in the Odes of Solomon¹

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IN a former paper in the *JOURNAL* (vol. xxx, part 2, 1911) I advanced certain evidence in favor of the hypothesis that the Odes of Solomon were written by Bardaisan of Edessa (A.D. 155–222), and in concluding stated that I regarded the results there attained as tentative only, the verification of which must be deferred until a more thorough examination of the Odes in the light afforded by astrological and Gnostic speculation shall have been completed. It is my aim in the present paper, first, to examine from these latter points of view the conception of Christ's descent from heaven as found in the Odes, taking the most important and interesting document, the twenty-third Ode, as my text, and, second, to consider, in the light of the astronomical data afforded by that Ode, certain dates for the Annunciation recognized in the early centuries.

¹ Mr. F. C. Burkitt's article, "A New MS of the Odes of Solomon," *Jour. of Theol. Studies*, xiii (April, 1912), pp. 372–385, containing a collation of the printed text of the Odes with that of a tenth century MS discovered by him in the British Museum, came into my hands after this paper was written. The new MS contains from XVII, 7 to the end. I have noted its readings (N.) whenever they affect the sense of Harris's text (H.).—Mr. Burkitt remarks (p. 373) that my theory as to Bardaisan's authorship will not "commend itself to any one who is familiar with original Syriac literature. The Odes in Syriac are a creditable piece of work, but their language is a very different thing from the graceful and flexible tongue in which the Acts of Judas Thomas and the Dialogue on Fate are written. No theory of the origin of these Odes is satisfactory which regards the Syriac translation that we possess otherwise than as an exotic." As I had showed in my paper (p. 166) that, according to Epiphanius, Bardaisan wrote both in Syriac and in Greek (*Pan.*, Hær. 56: *λόγους τις ὦν ἐν ταῖς δυοῖν γλώσσαις*, 'Ελληνικῇ τε διαλέκτῳ καὶ τῇ τῶν Σύρων φωνῇ), and had stated (p. 170, n. 22) that I was "inclined to believe the original was Greek," it would seem that Mr. Burkitt had not read my paper before commenting upon it.

But if one would understand many allusions in the Odes which are at first glance perplexing, one must bear in mind the conceptions of the world of spirit and of its relations to the world of matter which occupied the thoughts of the poet. Whether the Odes are to be classed as Gnostic or not depends upon the definition of "Gnostic," but it seems to me indisputable that they contain certain ideas which were current among the Gnostics and were not current, although perhaps occasionally to be found, in other forms of Christianity. I shall therefore preface my study of the text of the Odes with a sketch of some of these ideas in the form in which the Gnostics knew them. In drawing it my sole object has been to give a distinct and faithful picture of this peculiar mode of thinking the universe. The order of presentation which I have adopted is therefore not intended to follow either the chronological order in which the several elements may be supposed to have aggregated themselves into a system or the logical order in which an individual thinker may be supposed to have constructed or arranged his system. Nor have I endeavored to portray any individual system. While most of our information comes from Valentinian sources, the leading ideas, to which I have tried to confine myself, were held by the Valentinians in common with other schools of Gnostics.

One of the root-conceptions of Gnosticism is its theory of spirit. Spirit is mind, but it is also light. Subjectively, a spirit is known to himself as mind or consciousness; objectively, he is seen by other spirits as light. If he possess a form analogous to those of human beings, his substance seems to be light; if he does not, he may appear as a beam of light or even as diffused light. The brightness of the light corresponds to the rank or degree of perfection of the spirit. The lowest are murky and dull; the higher blaze with a splendor infinitely transcending that of the sun.

The world of spirit, therefore, is a world of light. Individual spirits live and move and have their being at any given stage of their development in a certain region of this world. Above and beyond the region in which the spirit

finds himself lie realms upon realms of light, ever more and more dazzlingly brilliant. Each realm is itself an Intelligence, and all somehow stream from and are centered in an incomprehensible, ineffable, infinite Source. Below lie regions ever diminishing in splendor, passing from the radiance of light to the dull glow of fire, and thence to twilight, gloom, and dense darkness.² The darkness is the world of matter. In this darkness of matter can be seen here and there sparks³ of light. These are embodied spirits. The brighter among them are the spirits of men morally and mentally more highly developed than their fellows, while in the ignorant and the vicious the spark is so dim as to be all but invisible.

Such was the picture of the real universe which was more or less clearly sketched in the minds of most if not all of the Gnostic philosophers. And the task which they set themselves was to give a complete account of this spiritual world, of its topography, so to speak, of its inhabitants, their names, the order and manner of their procession from their Source and of their relation to the world of matter; to explain how and why the "sparks" became entangled in

² These ideas are fully set forth only in the Coptic works (*Pistis-Sophia*: Latin translation by M. G. Schwartz, Berlin, 1851; German by C. Schmidt, *Griech. Christl. Schriftsteller*, xiii, pt. 1, Leipzig, 1905; English by G. R. S. Meade [from the Latin]; *The Two Books of Jeû*, German translation by Schmidt, *op. cit.*; *An Unknown Old Gnostic Work*, German translation, *ibid.*). A similar scheme can be traced in many other systems. Clement of Alexandria's argument (*Exc. ex Theod.*, §§ 10-12), to prove that spiritual beings possess forms, is probably directed, as Heinrici (*D. val. Gnosis*, Berlin, 1871, p. 89) thinks, against certain Gnostic statements, nevertheless his conclusions, *e.g.* his distinctions between spirits of different grades as "intelligent fire," or "intelligent air," "intelligent light," and "unapproachable light," are good Gnostic doctrine. That spirits have, or may have, forms was held by many Gnostics.

³ The conception seems to have been much the same in all the schools, but the terms varied. "Spark" occurs first in Saturnilus's system (*Iren. I*, 18, vol. i, 197, Harvey), and is very common; other terms are "seed" (*Exc. Theod.*, *passim*), "imprint," *χαρακτήρ* (*Docetæ ap. Hipp. Ref. VIII*, 9-10, pp. 416-18, D. & S.), "moisture of the light," *ικμάς τοῦ φωτός* (*Ophites ap. Iren. I*, 28, 2, Vol. I, p. 228, H.), which is probably intended to represent the Aramaic *ṭallâ*, "dew," *i.e.* the "sparks" in the underlying darkness are compared to drops of "dew," deposited by the light above.

darkness, and to set forth how they may be delivered and restored to the world of light. In accomplishing this task the Gnostics generally used freely the mythological, religious, scientific, and philosophical conceptions of their age. It is therefore not surprising that in many systems the astronomical and astrological conceptions then generally accepted play a leading part.

The world of matter extends as far as the circle of the moon. Next above lies the region of the seven planets, generally termed from them the Hebdomad, but also known by other names.

The region between the Hebdomad and the sky was called the Ogdoad.

The Hebdomad was subdivided into seven regions, each of which was ruled by the planet situated in it. It was also termed by some thinkers the "Mean" or "Midst,"⁴ and conceived as consisting of fire,⁵ which is the appropriate connecting link between light and darkness. The Hebdomad was also described as the "Right."

The sublunary region was known as the "Left," and was also probably conceived as subdivided into regions—in this case three, those of air, water, and earth, which represent the gradual shading off, so to speak, of light into darkness.⁶

Above the Ogdoad is the sky, which separates the world of light proper from the world below. In it is set the Cross (*σταυρός*), and both the Cross and the sky seem to be termed Horos (*ὄρος*), the Boundary Mark or Boundary. By the Cross should be understood, perhaps, the "St. Andrew's Cross," formed by the intersection of the ecliptic and the celestial equator. If, however, Valentinus, who seems first to have introduced this conception, really was an Egyptian⁷ and had traveled as far south as Assouan, he may have had the Southern Cross in mind, which is there visible.

⁴ See note 55.

⁵ See note 55. Also Docetæ *ap.* Hipp. Ref., viii, 9, p. 418.

⁶ Excerpta ex Theodoto (Stählin, *Gr. Chr. Schriftsteller*, vol. xii, pt. 3), § 28: τὸ "θεὸς ἀποδιδούς ἐπὶ τρίτην καὶ τετάρτην γενεὰν τοῖς ἀπειθοῦσι" φασὶν . . . οἱ . . . ἀπὸ Οὐαλεντίνου τοὺς τρεῖς τόπους δηλοῦσθαι τοὺς ἀριστεροὺς κτλ.

⁷ Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergesch. d. Urchristenthums*, n. 479.

Above the Horos lie the realms of light. Each is a realm or region consisting of pure light, but each is also an intelligence. They were termed "Æons," and were conceived as the hypostatized thoughts of God. In most systems they were represented as emanated in pairs, male and female, each of which is the "consort" (σύζυγος) of the other, but there was no agreement among the several schools as to their number, order, or names. All taken together they were the "Pleroma," or "fullness," *i.e.* the "fullness of God" (Eph. 3 19).

I have said that light is mind, darkness is matter. But this sharp antithesis does poor justice to the subtleties of Gnostic philosophy. Strictly speaking, there is no matter. All that exists is mind in varying degrees of vividness. Absence of mind or total darkness is nothingness.⁸ Hence each of the regions of which the universe consists is itself an intelligence, and the intelligence bears the same name as the place. The minor inhabitants proper to each place are usually conceived as emanations of the place precisely as the place itself is an emanation from a higher order of being. But besides the proper inhabitants, there are found in certain

⁸ The problem was definitely put by the Valentinians. Ptolemy says in his letter to Flora [Epiph., Pan. Hær., 33, edited by Harnack in Lietzmann's *Kleine Texte*, no. 9], v. 6: "For the substance of the Opposite (τοῦ ἀντικείμενου ἡ οὐσία) is corruption and darkness, for it is material and multifarious (πολυσχεδής, πολυσχιδής *al.*). But the substance of the Father of all things, the Unbegotten, is incorruption and self-subsistent light (φῶς αὐτοὸν), simple and uniform (ἀπλοῦν τε καὶ μονοειδές). But the substance of this [intermediate being, the Mean (μεσότης) or Creator] has produced a kind of twofold power [lacuna], yet he is himself the likeness of the Superior (τοῦ κρείττονος εἰκὼν). Let not this [fact] unsettle your determination to learn (σὲ θορυβεῖτω θέλουσαν μαθεῖν) how from one Source of all things, which is and is confessed and believed by us to be One, the Unbegotten and Incorruptible and Good, these natures, that of corruption and that of the Mean, were constituted, seeing that they are of unlike substance, and that it is the nature of the good to beget and produce things like and of like substance with itself. For you shall learn, God willing, in due order both the source and the generation of this [evil principle], if you are found worthy of the apostolic tradition which we also have received by succession [and] with [it the ability] to test all doctrines by the teaching of our Saviour." But it may well be that the earlier forms of Gnosticism were dualistic, as Bousset holds (*Hauptprobleme der Gnosis*, Göttingen, 1907, ch. iii).

places temporary inhabitants who will ultimately reach higher or lower orders of being.

The Pleroma is the proper place of the Æons. The Ogdoad is the place of Sophia, known also by many other names, who in the Valentinian and some other systems is a fallen Æon destined to return ultimately to the Pleroma. With her are the spiritual Christ and the purified spirits of men—so certain Valentinians. The seven regions of the Hebdomad are inhabited by the seven planetary spirits according to nearly all systems. The midmost of the seven is “Paradise,” say the Valentinians, where the souls of the just which have not yet been wholly purified are temporarily detained, and here also, according to Theodotus, the “psychic Jesus” sits beside the “Place,” the Ruler of the Hebdomad. Other systems people the Ogdoad and Hebdomad with an innumerable multitude of beings, many of which represent and bear the names of the constellations, decans, “places,” signs, and other elements of astrology.

The regions below the moon are occupied by beings innumerable in multitude and low of grade. Among them are men and animals, demons of all sorts, and the Great Serpent or Devil, the representative of Darkness and Evil. We possess few details (save in Pistis-Sophia and the kindred works), and such scattered allusions as we do possess are not always intelligible.

The origination of this universe was described in nearly all Gnostic systems as due to emanation of the lower by the higher, and many of the leading ideas recur repeatedly in different systems, although the differences in detail are numerous and important. Into these questions, however, I need not now enter, as they are not directly related to the interpretation of the Odes which I wish to study.

The text of Ode XXIII runs as follows :

- (1) Joy is of the saints,
and who shall put it on
if not they alone ?
- (2) Grace is of the elect,

- and who shall take it
if not they that have trusted in it from the beginning?
- (3) Love is of the elect,
and who shall put it on
if not they that possessed it from the beginning?
- (4) Walk ye in the freely given knowledge of the Most
High,⁹
for his delight¹⁰ and for the perfection of his
knowledge.
- (5) His Thought was like a Letter,
his Will came down from the Most High;¹¹
It was sent like an arrow from a bow,
which flies forcibly.
- (6) There hurried towards the Letter many hands,
to intercept it and to take it and to read it;
- (7) But it slipped through their¹² fingers,
and they were afraid of it,
and of the Seal that was upon it.
- (8) For it was not permitted them to break its¹³ Seal;
for the power that was upon the Seal was stronger
than they.
- (9) So they went after the Letter —
they that saw it —
That they might know where it would lodge
and who would read it and who would hear it.
- (10) A Wheel then received it
and it alighted thereupon,¹⁴

⁹ N. adds, "and ye shall know the grace of the Lord, for," etc.

¹⁰ "his" should probably be taken in both cases in the objective sense — the Christian's aim is delight in God and the perfecting of his knowledge of God.

¹¹ So H.; N., and Harris's translation, "from on high." The difference is unimportant, for in the Gnostic idealism the place and its occupant are identical. See nn. 55, 56.

¹² The suffix and two verbs which follow are masc., showing that the metaphor, "hands" (fem.), is no longer clearly in mind.

¹³ H., "his seal."

¹⁴ Literally, "came upon it." Since both "letter" and "wheel" are fem., the proper reference of the verbs and pronouns of vv. 10-16 is often uncertain.

- (11) And there was a sign with it [*i.e.* the Letter]
of a Kingdom and of a Rule.
- (12) And everything that moved the Wheel
it [the Letter] mowed and cut down.
- (13) And the multitude it held in check
who were opponents,
And covered rivers and crossed over
and rooted up many forests ¹⁵
and made a broad Way.
- (14) The Head came down to the Feet
because to the feet the Wheel had run.¹⁶
- (15) And that which had alighted ¹⁷ upon it
was a Letter of command ¹⁸
that all the Places should assemble.¹⁹
- (16) And there was seen at its [the Wheel's] head ²⁰
the Head that was revealed,
the Son ²¹ of Truth from the Father Most High.
- (17) And he inherited and took possession of everything,
and the thought of the Many was annihilated;
- (18) All the apostates raged and fled,
the persecutors were quenched and became extinct.²²
- (19) The Letter was a great tablet
written wholly by the finger of God,
- (20) And the Name of the Father was upon it
and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
to reign for ever and ever,
Hallelujah.

The four opening verses are not intimately connected with the remainder of the poem ; they are rather of the nature of

¹⁵ N., "peoples."

¹⁶ N., "feet"; H., "foot." Syr., "ran." But the English preterite might signify a continued or habitual action, whereas the Syriac signifies a single completed act.

¹⁷ So also N.; H., "and that which was a sign upon it."

¹⁸ N., "and a command."

¹⁹ Read *impf.* for *pf.*

²⁰ So also N.

²¹ With Labourt, omit the "and."

²² So N.; H., "were enraged."

a prelude, designed to touch the feelings and awaken the devotional spirit. The ideas which they express, that love, joy, grace belong to "the saints," "the elect," only, that they "take" them and "put them on," and the emphasis laid on knowledge, are familiar Gnostic ideas, but are by no means restricted to Gnostic circles.

Verses 5-16 describe the descent of Christ from the highest realms of the spiritual world to the world of matter, symbolized as a "letter" sent like an arrow from a bow. The letter embraces two elements, God's Thought and His Will.

The same conception is ascribed by Irenæus and Hippolytus²³ to Ptolemy, the Valentinian. Bythos had two consorts (also termed "modifications" or "conditions"), Thought and Will. "For first," say they, "he *thought* to emanate something, then he *willed*. Wherefore also these two conditions or powers, Thought and Will, having been mingled, as it were, one with one another, the emanation of the Only-begotten and of Truth was due to connection, which [two] came forth, visibles from the invisibles, as certain copies and images of the two conditions of the Father, Intellect, of Will and Truth, of Thought. The male image is that of the later-begotten Will, the female of the unbegotten Thought, because the Will proved to be the power, so to speak, of the Thought. For Thought thought eternally the emana-

²³ Iren. Hær., i, 6 ; Hipp. Ref., vi, 38, p. 294 D. & S. ; Epiph., Hær. 33, 1. Greek from Hipp. Οἱ δὲ περὶ τὸν Πτολεμαῖον δύο συζύγους αὐτὸν ἔχειν λέγουσιν, ἃς καὶ διαθέσεις καλοῦσιν, ἔννοιαν καὶ θέλησιν· πρῶτον γὰρ ἐνενοήθη τι προβαλεῖν, ὡς φασιν, ἔπειτα ἠθέλησε. Διὸ καὶ τῶν δύο τούτων διαθέσεων καὶ δυνάμεων, τῆς τῆς ἐννοίας καὶ τῆς θελήσεως, ὥσπερ συγκραθεισῶν εἰς ἀλλήλας ἡ προβολὴ τοῦ τε μονογενοῦς καὶ τῆς ἀληθείας κατὰ συζυγίαν ἐγένετο, οὓς τινες τύπους καὶ εἰκόνας τῶν δύο διαθέσεων τοῦ πατρὸς διελθεῖν ἐκ τῶν ἀοράτων ὁρατάς, τοῦ μὲν θελήματος τὸν νοῦν, τῆς δὲ ἐννοίας τὴν ἀλήθειαν· καὶ διὰ τοῦτο τοῦ ἐπιγεννητοῦ θελήματος ὁ ἄρρην εἰκῶν, τῆς δὲ ἀγεννήτου ἐννοίας ὁ θῆλυς, ἐπεὶ τὸ θελημα ὥσπερ δύναμις ἐγένετο τῆς ἐννοίας. Ἐνενοεῖτο μὲν γὰρ αἰὲν ἡ ἐννοια τὴν προβολήν, οὐ μέντοι γε προβάλλειν αὐτὴ κατ' αὐτὴν ἡ δύνατο, ἀλλὰ ἐνενοεῖτο, ὅτε δὲ ἡ τοῦ θελήματος δύναμις (ἐπεγενετο), τότε (δ) ἐνενοεῖτο προβάλλει. — Συζυγία, which I have rendered "connection," would perhaps be better represented by "marriage." At all events, σύζυγος was at this time the ordinary popular word for "husband" or "wife."

tion, but was not able herself to emanate of herself what she thought. When, however, the power of Will supervened, she emanated what she thought."

Clement of Alexandria's "Excerpts from the Writings of Theodotus and of the So-called Eastern Doctrines" have preserved an account of a similar theory and add some important details.²⁴

"The Father, then, being unknown, willed to become known to the æons, and through reflection upon himself, as though become cognizant of himself, emanated a spirit of knowledge-subsisting-in-knowledge — the Only-begotten. So he also that came forth from knowledge, that is from the Father's reflection, proved to be knowledge, *i.e.* the Son, because 'through the Son the Father is made known.' The spirit of love is mingled with that of knowledge, as the Father with the Son and reflection with truth, when it comes forth from truth [read "from will"], as knowledge from reflection. And 'the Only-begotten Son abiding in the bosom of the Father' interprets the reflection through knowledge to the æons, as though indeed emanated from beneath his bosom, but when he appears here he is termed by the Apostle not 'Only-begotten,' but, 'as the Only-begotten,' 'the glory as of the Only-begotten,' because, although he is one and the same, Jesus is the First-born in the Creation but Only-begotten in the Pleroma, and he is the same, although he is to every Place such as it is capable of receiving."

²⁴ Exc. ex Theod., (Stählin) § 7. "Αγνωστος οὖν ὁ πατὴρ ὃν ἠθέλησεν γνωσθῆναι τοῖς αἰῶσι, καὶ διὰ τῆς ἐνθυμήσεως τῆς ἑαυτοῦ, ὡς ἂν ἑαυτὸν ἐγνωκώς, πνεῦμα γνώσεως οὐσης ἐν γνώσει προέβαλε τὸν Μονογενῆ. γέγονεν οὖν καὶ ὁ ἀπὸ γνώσεως, τουτέστι τῆς πατρικῆς ἐνθυμήσεως, προελθὼν γνώσις, τουτέστιν ὁ υἱός, ὅτι "δὲ υἱὸς ὁ πατὴρ ἐγνωσθῇ" [cf. Mt. 11 27, L. 10 22]. τὸ δὲ τῆς ἀγάπης πνεῦμα κέκραται τῷ τῆς γνώσεως, ὡς πατὴρ υἱῷ καὶ ἐνθύμησις ἀληθείᾳ, ἀπ' ἀληθείας [l. ἀπὸ θελήματος] προελθὼν ὡς ἀπὸ ἐνθυμήσεως ἡ γνώσις. καὶ ὁ μὲν μείνας "μονογενὴς υἱὸς εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς" [cf. J. 1 18] τὴν ἐνθύμησιν διὰ τῆς γνώσεως ἐξηγεῖται τοῖς αἰῶσιν, ὡς ἂν καὶ ὑπὸ τοῦ κόλπου αὐτοῦ προβληθείς, ὁ δὲ ἐνταῦθα ὀφθαλμοὺς οὐκέτι "μονογενὴς" ἀλλ' "ὡς μονογενὴς" πρὸς τοῦ ἀποστόλου προσαγορεύεται, "δόξαν ὡς μονογενοῦς" [cf. J. 1 14], ὅτι εἰς καὶ ὁ αὐτὸς ὢν ἐν μὲν τῇ κτίσει πρωτότοκος ἐστὶν Ἰησοῦς, ἐν δὲ πληρώματι μονογενὴς· ὁ δὲ αὐτός ἐστι τοιοῦτος ὢν ἐκάστω τόπῳ ὅλος κεχωρησθῆαι δύναται.

Hippolytus,²⁵ in his account of the Valentinians, has preserved a fragment which seems to belong to the same sphere of ideas :

"[The Father] was not fond of solitude. For, he says, he is wholly love, and love is not love unless the Beloved exist."

The first two accounts are obviously derived from a common source and supplement each the other. The Father thinks himself and wills to reveal his thought. Will involves both intention and motive ; his intention is to reveal himself, his motive is love. As long as the intention remains "in the bosom of the Father," it is his Only-begotten Son to whom alone the Father is adequately known ; when revealed it is "as the Only-begotten Son," for none of the lower "Places," the several regions or orders of spiritual being, can know God adequately — each receives of the revelation according to its capacity of comprehension. When the Father wills the revelation, there proceed from his bosom two "streams of air" (*πνεύματα*) or "spirits," one of knowledge (*γνῶσις*) from Thought, and one of love (*ἀγάπη*) from Will.²⁶ These "streams of air" are no doubt conceived by the writer, as by the Stoics, as at once spiritual and semi-material substances, or at least as spiritual substances which behave like the most tenuous material substances known to the ancients, air and flame.²⁷ Hence, upon issuing from

²⁵ Ref. vi, 29, p. 272 : . . . φιλέρημος γὰρ οὐκ ἦν. Ἀγάπη γὰρ, φησίν, ἦν ὁλος, ἣ δὲ ἀγάπη οὐκ ἔστιν ἀγάπη, ἐὰν μὴ ᾗ τὸ ἀγαπώμενον. The term "Beloved" as a title of Christ, which occurs only once in the NT [Eph. 1 ε], had a peculiar significance to the Valentinians, and occurs in a quotation from Valentinus given by Clem. Alex. [Strom. 6, 52, *ap.* Hilgenfeld, *Ketzergesch. d. Urchristenthums*, p. 301] οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ λαὸς ὁ τοῦ ἡγαπημένου ὁ φιλούμενος καὶ φιλῶν αὐτόν. It occurs also twice in the Odes as a title of Christ, III, 5, "I love the Beloved" ; VII, 1, "As the impulse of anger against evil, so is the impulse of joy over the Beloved."

²⁶ The text has "from Truth." But this is obviously impossible. Truth, as the feminine element in the first pair of æons, has not yet been emanated, and the emanation from Truth is not Love but Life (*ζωή*).

²⁷ Πνεῦμα as a technical term was first elaborated, if not first formulated, by the Stoics, but had become familiar to all educated persons long before the Christian era. Good illustrations from a Christian writer are supplied by the "Shepherd of Hermas," *Mand.*, v, 1 (the Holy Spirit is "darkened,"

the Father's bosom the two streams "blend" into a unity in which the two elements still subsist in new forms, thus constituting the first pair of æons, Truth, corresponding, as is appropriate, to Thought, and Intellect (*νοῦς*) to Will, "because Will is the power of Thought."

In Ode XXIII, then, two elements, Thought and Will, are supposed to enter into the composition, so to speak, of Christ. This throws light upon the symbolical picture of Ode XIX (see my former paper), in which two streams of "milk" are represented as proceeding from the "two breasts of the Father," and as being blended by the Holy Spirit in her bosom. The function ascribed to the Holy Spirit is novel, but in other respects, the emanation of the two streams and their blending, the theory is identical with the Gnostic doctrine above described.

The conception of "Will as the Power of Thought" here symbolized as the bow which dispatches the arrow, recurs also both in the Odes and in the Acts of Judas Thomas.

Ode VIII :

- (18) I took pleasure in them
and am not ashamed of them,
(19) For my work are they
and the power of my thoughts. . . .
(21) I willed and fashioned mind and heart;
mine they are, and at my right I have placed mine
elect.

"choked," "crowded out" of a man's heart by angry temper), *Mand.*, x, 3 (sadness mingling with the intercession prevents its ascending to the altar). Such conceptions are common among the Gnostics; see, for example, Exc. ex Theod., § 17, where Clement argues that the union of the divine with the human spirit is not, as the Gnostics held, a case of "blending," or, as we would say nowadays, of "chemical combination" (the term first defined in this sense by Aristotle, *de gen. et corr.*, i, 11; *de sensu*, 3, 440 a 31), but of "juxtaposition" (. . . πνεῦμα γοῦν πνεύματι μίγνυται. ἐμοὶ δὲ δοκεῖ κατὰ παράθεσιν τοῦτο γενέσθαι, ἀλλ' οὐ κατὰ κράσιν). Similar conceptions occur in the Odes (e.g. III, 8, "I have been blended," in order to be found loving, with the Beloved"; iv, 9, "Thou hast given us thy communion," i.e. "a share of or in thyself") and in the *Acts of Judas Thomas* (e.g. vol. ii, Wright, p. 274), "Thou art seen to be his servant by . . . the communion of this God whom I preach" (same Syriac word). But this subject calls for a detailed study.

So in the "Acts" (II, 208, Wright) of Christ "He who was Thy Will, the Power of thy Thought," and, as in Ode VIII, of men (p. 165) "Thou whose mercy is upon men whom Thou hast willed and made."

The simile of the flying letter also occurs in the "Song of the Pearl" which is incorporated into these Acts.

Verses 6-9. As Christ descends, he passes through the various regions of the spiritual universe. The inhabitants of those regions see him and try to intercept and read the letter, *i.e.* try to comprehend him and his mission, but cannot do it. The "seal upon the letter," which was (v. 20) the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, they can perceive, but it frightens them away.

Virtually all of these ideas recur repeatedly in the various Gnostic systems, but the nature of the impression which Christ makes upon the denizens of the various regions is not always conceived in the same way. The oldest theory, that Christ's person and mission were concealed from the powers of this world, is suggested even by St. Paul, 1 Cor. 2 8, [the wisdom of God], "which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory," and is found in Ignatius (Eph. 19; see p. 193). The "seals" which Christ bears are mentioned in the ancient "Naasene" or "Ophite" hymn quoted by Hippolytus,²⁸ and are apparently supposed to protect Jesus and to enable him to pass through the æons:

²⁸ Ref., vi, 10, p. 176; trans. G. R. S. Mead, *Fragments of a Faith Forgotten*, London, 1906, p. 205, but modified by W. R. N.:

εἶπεν δ' Ἰησοῦς ἑσὸρ [l. ἰδοῦ] πάτερ
 ζήττημα κακῶν ἐπὶ χθόνα
 ἀπὸ σῆς πνοῆς ἐπιπλάσσεται.
 Ζητεῖ δὲ φυγεῖν τὸ πικρὸν χάος,
 καὶ οὐκ οἶδε πῶς διελεύσεται.
 Τοῦτου με χάριν πέμψον, πάτερ·
 σφραγίδας ἔχων καταβήσομαι.
 αἰῶνας ὁλοὺς διοδεύσω,
 μυστήρια πάντα διανοίξω,
 μορφὰς δὲ θεῶν ἐπιδείξω·
 καὶ τὰ κεκρυμμένα τῆς ἀγλας ὁδοῦ
 γνώσιν καλέσας, παραδώσω.

Jesus said: Father!
 A searching of evils on the earth
 [Inspired] of thy breath is straying!
 It seeks to shun the bitter Chaos,
 But knows not how to escape.
 Wherefore, send me, O Father!
 Possessed of seals, I will descend,
 Through all the æons I will make my way;
 All mysteries I will open,
 The shapes of the gods I will show,
 And the secrets of the Holy Way,
 Calling [them] Gnosis (knowledge) I will hand over.

The notion that the descending God disguised himself during his descent is first ascribed to Simon Magus, who claims that he himself thus came down from heaven: "in every heaven I changed my shape to correspond to the shape of those in each heaven that I might not be perceived by my angelic powers."²⁹ In the "Ophite" system of Irenæus Christ has recourse to the same device, but he employs it to despoil the inferior spirits of their spiritual substance.³⁰ But in the later (?) form of Basilides' system given by Hippolytus (Ref., vii, 25-26) a very different theory is taught. Not the "Sonship" but "the Gospel came into the world and traversed every dominion and power and lordship and every name that is named, and it came in reality although nothing descended from above nor did the blessed Sonship depart from that unthinkable and blessed nonexistent God."³¹ Just as a flame kindles "Indian naphtha" from afar, so the Sonship kindled and enlightened the mind of the Son of the Great Archon of the Ogdoad and through him the Great

²⁹ Epiph., Pan., i, 2, 2; Hær. 21: ἐν ἐκάστῳ δὲ οὐρανῷ μετεμορφούμενη φησί, κατὰ τὴν μορφήν τῶν ἐν ἐκάστῳ οὐρανῷ, ἵνα λάθω τὰς ἀγγελικὰς μου δυνάμεις.

³⁰ Iren. Hær., i, 28, Harvey, vol. i, p. 238: Descendisse autem eum per septem coelos, assimilatum filiis eorum dicunt, et sensim eorum evacuasse virtutem.

³¹ p. 370: . . . ἦλθε τὸ εὐαγγέλιον εἰς τὸν κόσμον καὶ διήλθε διὰ πάσης ἀρχῆς καὶ ἐξουσίας καὶ κυριότητος καὶ παντὸς ὀνόματος ὀνομαζομένου· ἦλθε δὲ ὧτως, καίπερ οὐδὲν κατήλθεν ἄνωθεν, οὐδὲ ἐξέστη ἡ μακαρία νύκτης ἐκείνου τοῦ ἀπερινοήτου καὶ μακαρίου οὐκ ὄντος θεοῦ.

Archon himself and the whole Ogdoad. In like manner the Ogdoad transmits the Gospel to the Hebdomad, the Hebdomad to Jesus, son of Mary, and he to us.

The Valentinian theory of the Excerpts occupies a position between these extremes. Christ descended, although not in such manner as to be separated from his Father, and encountered the lower spiritual beings, but he did not disguise himself. They did not know him simply because they were unable to comprehend him. Each "Place" apprehended him according to the measure of its capacity and so each apprehended him differently.³² The doctrine of the Docetæ recorded by Hippolytus (Ref., viii, 10, p. 422) employs the same conception to explain the existence of sects among Christians.

The conception of the Ode seems most nearly akin to the Valentinian doctrine. The intermediate beings are aware of Christ's presence among them, they desire to know more, they recognize the "seal," and it fills them with such fear that they make no further effort to penetrate into the mystery which it protects. So in the Excerpts,³³ "the powers of the Right knew the names of Jesus and of Christ even before his appearance, but they did not know the meaning of the sign."

It is from the point of view of this Valentinian doctrine that I would interpret the 13th Ode:

Behold the Lord is our mirror!
Open ye your eyes and behold them in him,
and learn the manner of your faces

³² So Ephr. Syr. Hymn de Nat., iii (Opp. Vat. Ed., vol. ii, p. 413 B; trans. J. B. Morris, *Select Works of S. Ephrem*, etc., Oxf., 1847, p. 24): "The Angels as Angels saw Him; according to the measure of his knowledge each man beheld him; according to the measure of each man's discernment, thus he perceived Him that is greater than all. The Father and Himself alone are a full measure of knowledge to know Him as He is! For every creature whether above or below obtaineth each his measure of knowledge," etc.

³³ § 43, *Λέγουσιν οὖν ὅτι αἱ δεξιαὶ ᾗδεσαν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ καὶ τοῦ Χριστοῦ τὰ ὀνόματα καὶ πρὸ τῆς παρουσίας, ἀλλὰ τοῦ σημείου οὐκ ᾗδεσαν τὴν δύναμιν*. In § 23 a knowledge that Christ was born of the Holy Spirit and a virgin is ascribed to the "angels of the Right."

and tell forth praises to his Spirit;
 Wipe off the filth from your faces
 and love his holiness and put it on,
 and ye shall be spotless always before him.
 Hallelujah.

The Lord is our mirror because each of us sees himself in him — because our ability to perceive him is determined by the degree of our spiritual development.

The same idea occurs in the strongly Gnostic fragment of the Acts of John discovered and published by Prof. M. R. James.³⁴ Jesus says:

“I am a mirror to thee that perceivest me.”³⁵

That the meaning of the simile is the same as the Valentinian is implied in what seems to me the most probable interpretation of a corrupt passage in the same fragment:

“What thou art thou seest — this I have shown thee; what I am, this I alone know, no one else. Mine, suffer thou me to keep; thine, see thou through me. But really to see *me* is, I have said, not given, but [only] what thou canst know because akin [thereto].”³⁶

Verses 10–16 of Ode XXIII describe Christ’s arrival in the great Wheel of the Zodiac (ζωδιακὸς κύκλος), his assumption of dominion over the powers that have hitherto controlled it, the homage they render him, and his first appearance to human eyes, as the Star of Bethlehem. Paragraphs 69–75 of the Excerpts supply so good a commentary upon these verses that I translate them in full.

§ 69. Destiny (εἰμαρμένη) is a combination (σύνοδος) of many opposed powers. They are not seen, nor are they manifest, yet they control the course of the stars and govern through them.

³⁴ Texts and Studies, v. 1, 1897.

³⁵ Bonnet, *Acta Apost. Apocrypha*, Pt. ii, 1, 1898, p. 198, 12, “Ἐσοπτρόν εἰμι σοι τῷ νοούντι με.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, § 101, 15: δ γὰρ εἰ [l. εἰ Hilgenfeld] σὺ ὁρᾷς τοῦτο ἐγὼ σοι ἔδειξα· ὁ δὲ εἰμι τοῦτο ἐγὼ μόνος οἶδα, ἄλλος οὐδεὶς. τὸ οὖν ἐμὸν εἶλμε [l. εἶα me James] ἔχειν, τὸ δὲ σὺν δι’ ἐμοῦ ὁρᾶν [l. ὅρα James], ἐμὲ δὲ θντῶς ὁρᾶν, οὐ [l. οὐκ] ἔφην ὑπάρχειν ἄλλ’ ὁ σὺ δὲ νῦ [l. δύνῃ James] γνωρίζειν συγγενὴς ὢν. For other interpretations, see Bonnet, *App. Crit.* and Hennecke, *NT Apokryphen*, *Handbuch*, p. 534.

For each of them by virtue of its precedence [over others], as it rises with the motion of the Universe, gets the control over the [creatures] born under the influence of that very force³⁷ (*κατ' αὐτήν τὴν δύναμιν*) because they are in a sense its children.

§ 70. Through the fixed stars and the planets the invisible powers which ride upon them manage and supervise births, but the stars themselves do nothing, they only display the operation of the ruling powers,³⁸ precisely as the flight of birds has a meaning, but effects nothing.

§ 71. So the twelve signs of the Zodiac and the seven stars which traverse them, sometimes moving in the same direction, sometimes in the opposite, when rising . . . they, being moved by the powers, display the motion of the real substance in its operation upon the birth of living beings and the modification of circumstances. But both the stars and the powers are diverse — beneficent, maleficent, right, left —³⁹ to all which in common the [creature] born belongs, and every [event] takes place through their influence at the proper time, for the [star then] ruling produces its appropriate effects, one at the beginning [of life], another at [its] end.

§ 72. From this rivalry and conflict of the powers the Lord delivers us and gives us peace [and release] from the array of the powers and of the angels, of whom some are arrayed on our side and others against us. For some are like soldiers fighting for us, as one would expect of God's ministers, but some are like bandits, for the Evil One was not girded with his sword by the King, but snatched it in rebellion for himself.

Because of our opponents, therefore, who through the body and our surroundings get aboard the soul and bond it into slavery, those of the Right are not able to keep pace with them so as to keep us safe and protect us. For they are not perfectly careful, like the Good Shepherd, but each is like the hireling who sees the wolf coming and flees, and is not eager to give his life for his own sheep. Moreover, man, on whose behalf is the conflict, is a feeble creature, easily influenced for the worse, and coöperates with them that hate him, whereby his evils are multiplied.

³⁷ The force of the celestial "wheel" which it communicates to the dominant star, and which the star transmits to earth.

³⁸ The "force" exerted by the stars is not to be conceived as operating mechanically, as, *e.g.* by Ptolemy, but as the "motion of the real substance" (§ 71), *i.e.* spiritual light and substance, of which the heaven and the stars are the sensible expression.

³⁹ The beneficent are "those on the right," as in the Book of the Laws (see my former paper, pp. 180, 190, 204), and, seemingly, in Ode XIX.

§ 74. For this reason the Lord came down to make peace, the peace of heaven, for those on earth — as the Apostle says, “Peace on earth and glory in the highest.” Therefore there arose a foreign Star and a new, destroying the ancient star-rule, shining with a new light not that of the firmament, taking new and saving paths — the Lord himself, Pathfinder (ὁδηγός) of men, descending upon earth in order to transfer those that believed in the Christ from Destiny to his Providence.

§ 75. That there is a Destiny for others, say they, the effects foretold prove, and the science of astrology (ἡ τῶν μαθημάτων θεωρία) also is an obvious proof. Hence the Magi not only saw the Star of the Lord, but also perceived the truth, that a King had been born, and King of whom, namely of the pious. At that time Jews alone were famed (διαβόητοι) for piety. For this reason, therefore, the Saviour, when coming down to the pious, came first to those who at that time had won a name (δόξαν ἀπο βερομένους) for their piety.

(§§ 76, 77 teach that baptism delivers us from the power of the evil spirits.)

§ 78. Until Baptism, then, Destiny is, they say, true, but after it the astrologers no longer speak the truth.

§ 25. The Apostles, they say, were translated to the twelve signs of the zodiac. For as birth is regulated by the latter, so is the new birth under the supervision of the Apostles.

The writer of the Odes does not tell us what he imagined that “sign of a Kingdom and of a Rule” to be which Christ bore with him and which enabled him to overcome all obstacles in his descent to earth, nor is it possible, in view of the inexhaustible fertility of Gnostic fancy, to do more than conjecture how he pictured it. Since Christ was a being from the higher light-regions, the poet probably conceived his descent as like that of a brilliant meteor plunging into the abyss of darkness below, and it may well be that the sign was nothing other than the dazzling brilliancy of his light. So in the account of Christ’s ascent given in *Pistis-Sophia*, c. 11 sqq., emphasis is always laid upon the dazzling light of his mystery-garment⁴⁰ and upon the fear and awe which it inspires in the inhabitants of the various regions through

⁴⁰ See also Harris’s discussion of the “coats of skin,” pp. 66 sqq., of his first edition of the Odes. Compare n. 63^a.

which he passes. But his garment bears also the mystery-names of the innumerable beings whom he is to encounter, and these names cast a spell upon their possessors. Whether the poet had any such thought in mind it is not possible to say with certainty, but since the "Seal" which frightens away the spirits is the name of the Trinity, the Sign, which seems to be distinguished from the Seal, may be something like the garment of light of Pistis-Sophia.

The things "which move the Wheel" are "the invisible powers which ride upon" the fixed stars and planets (Exc. Theod., § 70); the "opponents" are the "powers that are arrayed against us" (*ibid.*, § 72), the "rivers and forests" are poetic similes for the antagonistic powers which Christ encounters and overcomes. The "forests" I have not met with elsewhere, but the "rivers," especially of fire, abysses, "waters of fire," occur elsewhere with reference to the regions below the moon, and probably with reference to the Hebdomad also.⁴¹ Thus in descending Christ brushed aside all obstacles and "made a broad Way"; this is the Way by which we also are to travel from the regions of darkness to the realms of light. As a meteor leaves a train of light behind it in its flight, so Christ has left the "footprints of his light" behind him, thus "blazing" the path from earth to heaven for us. This is, I am convinced, the meaning of those perplexing verses of Ode VII:

- (12) Therefore he (God) had mercy on me in his great
 mercy,
 and granted me that I should ask of him
(13) and should receive of his Sacrifice;⁴²
 Because he [= the Sacrifice, *i.e.* Christ] is incorrupti-
 ble, the Perfection [= Pleroma?] of the Worlds
 [= Æons?] and their Father.

⁴¹ Acta Philippi, AAA, ii, 2, p. 86, 2; Acta Joannis, *ibid.*, ii, 1 p. 214, 4; Exc. Theod., § 38: "Gedicht des Jacob von Sarug üb. d. Palast," etc. ZDMG, i, 1871, v. 470. See p. 188 sqq.

⁴² Nestle's suggestion, that the Syriac translator has mistaken *ovolas* for *θvolas*, is not needed to make the passage intelligible. The Syriac word here used can denote the victim, *e.g.* Rom. 12 1, where the Peshitta uses it to

- (14) He (God) hath granted to him that he should be
seen of them that are his,
(15) that they might confess him that made them,
and might not think they were of themselves.
- (16) Knowledge [= gnosis (?)] did he make his Way,
he made it broad, and he made it long,⁴³
and brought it to all perfection [= the whole
Pleroma ?]
- (17) And he put upon it the marks [lit. "footprints"] of
his light,
and it went from the Beginning even to the End.
- (18) For the work was his (God's) doing,
and he was well pleased with the Son,
And because of his salvation,⁴⁴
he (the Son) shall have power over all things.

With the conception here suggested of the way between heaven and earth as a path of light, one may compare another picture from the Gnostic Acts.

translate *θυσιαν* in *παραστῆσαι τὰ σώματα ὑμῶν θυσιαν ζῶσαν*. The conception of partaking of Christ's sacrifice in a literal, but also spiritual, sense is characteristic of Gnostic soteriology. A kindred, but different, conception occurs Ode XX, 1:

I am a priest of the Lord,
he it is whom I serve as priest,
to him I offer the offering of his Thought (cf. Rom. 20 1,
τὴν λογικὴν λατρείαν ὑμῶν).

With the doctrine that Christ is the Father of the æons or worlds compare Mart. Matt., AAA, ii, 1, p. 220, 2, [Jesus, in the form of a child speaks to Matthew of Herod who wished] "to kill the child Jesus, who is older than the æons, but of all these æons I am the Father"; and with this compare Ode XXVIII, 15, "I was older than their memory;" Herm. Past. S., ix, 2, ὁ μὲν υἱὸς τοῦ Θεοῦ πάσης τῆς κτίσεως αὐτοῦ προγενέστερός ἐστιν ὥστε σύμβολον αὐτὸν γενέσθαι τῷ πατρὶ τῆς κτίσεως αὐτῶν· διὰ τοῦτο καὶ πάλαις ἐστιν, κτλ; Acta Joannis, AAA, II, 1, 212, 1, Ἰησοῦ, ὁ τῶν ὑπερουρανίων πατὴρ κτλ.

⁴³ So R. H. Connolly, "The Odes of Solomon: Jewish or Christian," *Jour. Theol. Studies*, January, 1912, 298-309.

⁴⁴ *I.e.* as a reward for the salvation which he wrought for man. The peculiar Christology of the Odes demands special study; it will suffice for the present to refer to XXXI, 4-5. The text can, however, be translated, "And for the sake of its salvation," *i.e.* that of the universe.

Acts of Philip, ch. 138 (AAA, ii, 2, p. 70). [At Philip's request the earth has opened and swallowed up a vast multitude of men, women, and children ; Christ appears and rebukes him ; he asks that they be brought up again] "and the Saviour turned and stretched out his hand and drew in the air a cross descending from above into the abyss, and the abyss was filled with light (*al. lect.*, and the cross was full of light), and the cross was like a ladder with steps, and the Saviour cried to those in the abyss and said, 'Come up all by the cross, because the Apostle Philip also has now taken pity on you through me that ye should again see the light of God.' And behold, the whole multitude of those that had gone down into the abyss went up (*al. lect.*, went up on the ladder of the cross of light)," etc.

It is probable that Ode XXXIX deals with the same theme as Ode XXIII. But the imagery is here taken for the most part from the Gospel story of Christ's walking on the water and the significance of the picture is not so clearly indicated as in the illustrations just given:

- (1) Mighty rivers are the powers⁴⁵ of the Lord :
- (2) Those that despise him
they sweep headlong :
they confuse their paths,⁴⁶
- (3) and wash away their fords,
and carry away their bodies,
and destroy their lives,
- (4) for they are swifter than lightning and quicker.
They that cross them in faith shall not be moved,
- (5) and they that walk on them without stain shall not
fear,
Because the Sign upon them is the Lord,

⁴⁵ Read emph. pl. without pron. suff., and take it as subject. If "rivers" be taken as subject the following statements are singularly inappropriate. Why are flooded rivers "the power of the Lord"? Why "swifter than lightning"? How did the Lord "bridge them by his Word" (*i.e.* Logos)? The reading that I suggest removes all difficulties. These "powers" are the spiritual beings whose function it is to intercept the unredeemed souls and carry them away to punishment (see p. 186 and note 41).

⁴⁶ Pl. points; so N.

- (6) and the Sign is the Way
 of them that cross in the Name of the Lord.
- (7) Put on then the Name of the Highest and know him,
 and ye shall cross without danger,
 while the rivers obey you.^{46a}
- (8) The Lord bridged them by his Word,
 and walked and crossed them afoot;
- (9) His footprints remain on the waters
 and have not been destroyed,
 but are like the Wood ^{46b} established in truth.
- (10) On this side and that the billows arose,
 and the footprints of our Lord Christ remain,
 and are not erased nor destroyed;
 They were made ⁴⁷ a Way for them that cross after
 him,
 That follow the Way of Faith ⁴⁸
 and worship his Name.

Ode XXXVIII is probably, as Harris has suggested (*Expositor*, July and November, 1911), an elaboration of a text supplied by Ps. 43, "Oh, send forth thy light and thy truth; let them lead me, let them bring me to thy holy hill." The imagery by means of which the theme is developed is suggested by the conception of the Way of Truth as a path of light leading from earth to heaven, but the poet is thinking rather of the approach to that Way, the Christian's life on earth, during which the Truth preserves him from the danger of error as it will hereafter protect him from the perils of the Midst. I shall quote only the opening verses:

^{46a} Cf. *Acta Joannis AAA*, II, 1, 214, 4; [the dying Apostle prays] "As I come to Thee, may fire withdraw, darkness be vanquished, chaos enfeebled, may the furnace go out, hell be quenched, may angels follow, demons fear, rulers collapse, powers fall, may the Places on the right stand still, those on the left not stay, may the devil be muzzled, Satan laughed to scorn . . . grant that I may finish a Way to Thee free of violence and despite" (*ἀνύβριστον καὶ ἀνεπηρέαστον*).

^{46b} *I.e.* the Cross, (*ξύλον*). Compare Ode XLII, 3, where the Wood is the finger post pointing up to the heavenly Way. Here the Way is as steadfast as the Cross and all it symbolizes.

⁴⁷ Read 3 pl. fem.

⁴⁸ All but a quotation from Rom. 4 12, as rendered by the Peshitta.

- (1) I ascended into the Light of Truth as though into a
vehicle,
- (2) and the Truth took me and brought me
and carried me over gulfs and chasms,⁴⁹
and from the rocks and waves it preserved me,
- (3) and was to me a vessel⁵⁰ of salvation
and set me on the steps⁵¹ of immortal life.

The new MS has preserved the true reading of the last verse. After bringing the Christian safely through the spiritual dangers which threaten him on earth, the Truth places his feet at death upon the steps of the heavenly ladder.

Verses 14-16 describe the appearance of the Star of Bethlehem. "The Head came down to the Feet"—the Head is Christ, the Feet the souls in the lowest regions. The conception of Christians as the spiritual body of Christ is of course very common without as well as within Gnostic circles, but the designation of any special class of souls as his "Feet" occurs, so far as I know, only in this Ode and in Ode XLII, where, speaking of his descent into hell, Christ says:

- (18) The Feet and Head he (death) let go,
for they were not able to endure my face.

But in 14^b "because to the feet the wheel had run," the "feet" are the "feet" of the zodiac, the sign of the Fishes, and in 16^a "and there was seen at its head," the "head" is that of the zodiac, the sign of the Ram.—The notion that the Ram is the first of the signs, their leader, and the "head of the universe," seems to have been first given currency by that Bible of the astrologers, the books ascribed to Petosiris and Nechepso, in which it was taught that at the creation of the universe Cancer, the Crab, was in the horoscope (the rising sign), and that the Ram, therefore, was at that time in the midheaven or superior culmination.

⁴⁹ N., "hollow chasms"; probably a combination of two variant readings.

⁵⁰ The context forbids "harbor."

⁵¹ N., or "ladder," Burkitt; H., "arms."

"Why they decided that the twelve signs begin with the Ram is now to be explained. . . . Upon reviewing the Nativity of the universe, which, as we have said, was constructed very carefully by the wisest of men [*i.e.* Petosiris and Nechepso], I have found that the superior culmination of the Nativity lay in the Ram. And so for this reason, because often, in fact always, the superior culmination takes in all nativities the controlling position, and because this place is first overhead and because we infer from this place the principles of the whole Nativity, all the signs appropriately take their rise from this sign, especially because most of the stars and in particular the two luminaries, *i.e.* sun and moon, dispatch their rays towards this sign. All nations then are agreed that the constellations begin with this sign."⁵²

The extension of the metaphor to the other signs of the zodiac was no doubt favored by the current association between the signs and the several parts of the human body. The head was supposed to be under the influence of the Ram, the neck under that of the Bull, and so on, the feet being under that of the Fishes.⁵³ The direct application of the names of the parts to the signs themselves is not so common, but is implied by Sextus Empiricus' language and is stated directly by Hephaestion of Thebes.⁵⁴

⁵² J. Firmicus Maternus, *Astr.*, iii, 2 (Pruckner, p. 48). Cur autem initium signorum duodecim ab Ariete esse uoluerunt, etiam nunc explicandum est . . . Retractans itaque genituram mundi, quam diximus a sapientissimis uiris prudentissime esse compositam, inueni MC geniturae in Ariete esse positum. Ob hoc itaque, quia frequenter, immo semper MC in omnibus genituris possidet principatum, et quia hic locus supra verticem primum [primus? Kroll's text is not accessible to me] est, et quia ex hoc loco totius geniturae fundamenta colligimus, opportune ex hoc signo initium signis omnibus datum est, praesertim cum maxima pars stellarum, sed et ambo lumina scilicet sol et luna radios suos in hoc signum miserint. Inde omnibus gentibus, siderum initium ex hoc signo inchoari conuenit. See Bouche-Leclercq, *L'Astr. Gr.*, pp. 185 sqq.; 129, n. 1.

⁵³ So from Manilius onward. Bouché-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, pp. 319, 320.

⁵⁴ Sext. Emp. Adv. Astr. (V), 21, κριὸν μὲν γὰρ κεφαλὴν ὀνομάζουσι . . . ἰχθύας δὲ πόδας. Fabricius not. ad. loc. Hephaestio Thebanus: τὸ κατὰ τὸν κριὸν δωδεκατημέριον κεφαλὴν τοῦ κόσμου προσαγορεύουσιν — ταῦρον τράχηλον τοῦ κόσμου προσηγόρευσαν . . . atque ita de caeteris.

Pisces then, the Fishes, are the feet of the zodiac, and Aries, the Ram, is its head. By the revolution of the Wheel the poet must intend to signify the apparent westward movement of the zodiac with reference to the sun (more commonly described as the sun's movement eastward through the zodiac).

The sun then, at the time of Christ's descent, has at least reached the Fishes. But that which had alighted upon the Wheel "was a letter of command that all the Places should assemble." In astrology, "place" (τόπος) signifies any region or point recognized as possessing special properties; it has also a special sense which is not here relevant (Bouché-Leclercq, *op. cit.*, ch. 9). But in the pure idealism of the Valentinian Gnostics, which recognized no existent save the conscious existent, "place" and the spirit or mind of that "place" or region are one and the same (see p. 172).

So Irenæus⁵⁵ says of the Valentinians:

"They say that the seven heavens are intelligent and assume them to be angels, and that the Demiurge is himself an angel resembling God; as also they say that Paradise, which is above the third heaven, is virtually a fourth angel, and that Adam received something from it when tarrying in it." In the Valentinian system described by Hippolytus,⁵⁶ "place" was the technical term for that grade of conscious being which was termed "psychic." It was less bright than spirit, its luminosity being reduced to a dull glow; its consciousness is of the kind represented in ourselves by sensation and sense perception. It occupies the entire Hebdomad.

⁵⁵ Hæc., i, 1, 9 (Harvey, i, p. 44). Τοὺς δὲ ἑπτὰ οὐρανούς εἶναι νοερούς φασιν· Ἀγγέλους δὲ αὐτοὺς ὑποτίθενται, καὶ τὸν δημιουργὸν δὲ καὶ αὐτὸν ἀγγελὸν Θεῷ ἑοικότα· ὥς καὶ τὸν Παράδεισον ὑπὲρ τρίτον οὐρανὸν ὄντα, τέταρτον Ἀγγελὸν λέγουσι δυνάμει ὑπάρχειν, καὶ ἀπὸ τούτου τι εἰληφέναι τὸν Ἀδὰμ διατετριφόμενον ἐν αὐτῷ.

⁵⁶ Ref., vi, 32 (p. 280, D. & S.): "Ἔστι δὲ πυρώδης, φησιν, ἡ ψυχικὴ οὐσία, καλεῖται δὲ καὶ τόπος [μεσότητος] ὑπὸ αὐτῶν καὶ ἑβδομάς καὶ παλαιὸς τῶν ἡμερῶν. D. & S. are probably right in rejecting μεσότητος, but it is possibly genuine, or may represent καὶ μεσότης. Cf. sub. κατὰ τοῦτο τοίνυν τὸ μέρος θνητὴ τις ἐστὶν ἡ ψυχὴ, μεσότης τις οὖσα, and Ptolemy to Flora (quoted note 8). The same terminology is used in the Excerpts, 2, 9, § 38, καὶ αὐτὸς δὲ ὁ Τόπος πύρινός ἐστι.

In Pistis-Sophia *τόπος* is one of the most common words, and is substantially equivalent to "spiritual being."

In the present passage of Ode XXIII the "places" are almost certainly the planets, together with the other spiritual beings of the planetary region, and the poet imagines them as summoned by the letter to greet and to yield themselves to Christ.

The earliest occurrence of this conception is in Ignatius' Epistle to the Ephesians (about A.D. 115).⁵⁷

"And hidden from the prince of this world were the virginity of Mary and her child-bearing, and likewise also the death of the Lord — three mysteries to be cried aloud — the which were wrought in the silence of God. How, then, were they made manifest to the æons? A star shone forth in the heavens above all the stars; and its light was unutterable, and its strangeness caused amazement; and all the rest of the constellations, with the sun and moon, formed themselves into a chorus about the star; but the star itself far outshone them all; and there was perplexity to know whence came this strange appearance which was so unlike them. From that time forward every sorcery and every spell was dissolved, the ignorance of wickedness vanished away, the ancient kingdom was pulled down, when God appeared in the likeness of man into newness of everlasting life; and that which had been perfected in the counsels of God began to take effect. Thence all things were perturbed, because the abolishing of death was taken in hand."

The same thought occurs in the hymn of praise which in the

⁵⁷ (Lightfoot's translation and text) ch. 19: Καὶ ἔλαθεν τὸν ἀρχοντα τοῦ αἰῶνος τούτου ἡ παρθενία Μαρίας καὶ ὁ τοκετὸς αὐτῆς, ὁμοίως καὶ ὁ θάνατος τοῦ Κυρίου· τρία μυστήρια κραυγῆς, ἅτινα ἐν ἡσυχίᾳ θεοῦ ἐπράχθη. πῶς οὖν ἐφανερώθη τοῖς αἰῶσιν; ἀστὴρ ἐν οὐρανῷ ἔλαμψεν ὑπὲρ πάντας τοὺς ἀστέρας, καὶ τὸ φῶς αὐτοῦ ἀνεκκάλητον ἦν, καὶ ξενισμὸν παρείχεν ἡ καινότης αὐτοῦ τὰ δὲ λοιπὰ πάντα ἀστραῖμα ἡλίῳ καὶ σελήνῃ χορὸς ἐγένετο τῷ ἀστέρι, αὐτὸς δὲ ἦν ὑπερβάλλων τὸ φῶς αὐτοῦ ὑπὲρ πάντα· ταραχὴ δὲ ἦν πόθεν ἡ καινότης ἡ ἀνόμοιος αὐτοῖς. ὅθεν ἐλύετο πᾶσα μαγεία καὶ πᾶς δεσμός, ἠφάνιζετο κακίας ἀγνοία, καθηρεῖτο παλαιὰ βασιλεία [διεφθείρετο], Θεοῦ ἀνθρωπίνως φανερουμένου εἰς καινότητα διδίου ζωῆς· ἀρχὴν δὲ ἐλάμβανεν τὸ παρὰ Θεῷ ἀπηρτισμένον. ἔκθεν τὰ πάντα συνεκινεῖτο διὰ τὸ μελετᾶσθαι θανάτου κατὰ λυσιν.

Syriac text of the Acts of Judas Thomas immediately follows the Song of the Pearl : ⁵⁸

“To be glorified art thou, the Father, Lifegiver (or Saviour) of all, who didst (or, dost) assemble the worlds for thy glory through (or, by the hand of) thy Beloved, that they might make praise to ascend to thee.”

In Ode XXII, which deals with the same theme, — the descent of Christ in order to prepare a Way from earth to heaven, — this “assembling” of the planets again figures :

- (1) Thou that didst bring me down from on high ⁵⁹
and take me up from the [regions] beneath, — ⁶⁰
- (2) Thou that didst assemble the [regions] between
and send them to me,
- (3) Thou that didst scatter my enemies and my adversaries,
- (4) Thou that didst give me power over the prisoners
that I might release them,
- (5) Thou that didst destroy by my hands the Serpent
with seven heads,
and hast set me over his roots ⁶¹
that I might destroy his seed : —
- (6) Thou wast with me ⁶² and didst help me,
and everywhere ⁶³ thy Name surrounded me. ^{63a}

⁵⁸ Wright, vol. i, p. 281 (vol. ii, p. 247). This hymn is omitted in all Greek MSS; a German version will be found in Hennecke, *Handbuch*, pp. 592–593.

⁵⁹ pl. points, with Labourt.

⁶⁰ The Syriac words for “regions beneath” and “regions between” are adjectives in the f. pl. and have no such technical meaning as is suggested by “places.” But the “regions between” are quite certainly the “Places of the Midst,” the spiritual beings of the Hebdomad, which are “assembled” and “sent,” more literally “impelled,” to meet the descending Christ. The word properly means, “throw,” but is used by the Peshitta, J. 20 ²⁵, to translate βάλλειν in its weaker sense of “put.” The text “send them to me” is that of N. H. has “send me.”

⁶¹ “root,” N.

⁶² So Coptic; H. and N., “there.”

⁶³ *I.e.* in every Place.

^{63a} So N. (translated by Burkitt “rampart” (?)) and Coptic. H. has “thy name was blessed by me.” The “Name” here probably represents the mystery garment which bears the mystery-names. See p. 185; compare, also, the “seal” of Ode IV, 8, wherewith the elect archangels are clad; the

- (7) Thy right [arm] destroyed his evil poison
and thy hand leveled the Way for these that believe
in thee.
- (8) And thou didst choose them from the graves,
and didst separate them from the dead ;
- (9) Thou didst take dead bones
and didst cover them with flesh ;
- (10) They were motionless,
and thou didst give them the activity of life.⁶⁴
- (11) Indestructible was thy Way,
and thy Face⁶⁵ thou hast brought to thy world for
[its] destruction
that all things should be dissolved and renewed.
- (12) Thy Rock shall be the foundation of all things,
and upon it thou hast built thy kingdom
and it has⁶⁶ become the dwelling-place of the saints,
Hallelujah.

Returning to the text of Ode XXIII : after the assembling of the Places, "there was seen at its [the Wheel's] head, the Head that was revealed, the Son of Truth from the Father Most High." When the great light which is Christ reaches the zodiac he is seen from earth as a new Star, and this Star, which is the Son of Truth, the Head of all spiritual beings, appears, as is appropriate, in the sign of the Ram, which is the head of the zodiac and of the world (see p. 191).

Verses 17 and 18 describe the establishment of Christ's Kingdom on earth. The "thought of the Many" is a con-

heavenly Robe of the Song of the Pearl ; Acta Phil., AAA, I, 1, 86, 5 ; clothe me with thy glorious robe, thy luminous seal which always shines," and Ode XXXIX, 7.

⁶⁴ So N. and Coptic : H. "aids to life."

⁶⁵ The use of "face" in the Odes is perplexing. In XLII, 18, "they were not able to endure my face," it is used in the familiar semi-metaphorical sense ; here one might, with slight change of meaning, substitute "presence." In XXV, 4, "because thy face was with me, which saved me by thy grace," it seems to mean, not literal, but virtual or spiritual presence. In XXXI, 5, "his (Christ's) face was justified," it can hardly be distinguished from the simple pronoun "he." In the present passage it is used apparently in the second of the above senses. Compare Clem. Alex. Exc. Theod., § 11 *πρόσωπον δὲ πατὴρ οὐκ ἔστιν, οὐδ' οὐκ γνωρίζεται ὁ πατήρ.*

⁶⁶ So Gunkel, and N. ; H., "thou hast."

ception which belongs to the sphere of Gnostic Idealism, a theme which I hope to study, in its bearing upon the Odes, at some other time. "Apostates" also is a technical Gnostic term⁶⁷ for the lower spirits. It has its root in the theory that the fall of these spirits was due to their assertion of self-will, which constituted rebellion against the higher law and made them apostates.

Verses 19-20 form the epilogue and call for no especial comment.

If I am right in my interpretation of verses 14-16, certain interesting questions suggest themselves.

One may deduce from the Ode three indications of the time at which the author supposes the Star to have appeared:

1. Before its appearance the sun is in the Fishes.
2. The planets are assembled.
3. The Star appears in the Ram.

From the third a fourth may be inferred. Since the sign of the Fishes lies to the west of the Ram, if the sun was still in the Fishes when the Star appeared in the Ram, the sun would rise before the Star, in which case the Star would be invisible by night, save for a short time after sunset as an evening star in the western sky. But a star when setting was regarded by astrologers as in an inferior and weakened state, and no astrologer would have represented the Star of Bethlehem as appearing in such a humiliating position. He would more probably have conceived it as a morning star, especially in view of the fact that the words of the Magi, "We have seen his star in the east," might be interpreted as meaning that they had seen it in the eastern sky. It is then probable that when the Star appears in the Ram the sun has passed out of the Fishes and at least some distance into the Ram. But if the Star is to be visible as a

⁶⁷ *E.g.* Hipp. *Ref.*, vi, 38, p. 292, Secundus . . . τὴν ἀποστᾶσαν καὶ ὑστερήσασαν δύναμιν οὐκ ἀπὸ τῶν τριάκοντα αἰώνων λέγει γεγενῆσθαι, ἀλλὰ ἀπὸ τῶν καρπῶν αὐτῶν. Exc. Theod., § 8, "καὶ ἡ σκοτία αὐτὸν οὐ κατέλαβεν," οἱ ἀποστατήσαντες καὶ οἱ λοιποὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων οὐκ ἔγνωσαν αὐτόν, καὶ ὁ θάνατος οὐ κατέσχευεν αὐτόν.

morning star, it cannot be too near the sun, for then it would be lost in his light. From a very early period astronomers had decided that a morning or evening star must be at least half a sign or 15° distant from the sun, but at a later period more exact calculations led to the conclusion that the interval might be as small as 8° for the brightest planets and would have to be as great as 18° for the most dim.⁶⁸ Of the two methods of estimation the first is the more common and the more likely to be used by any one not a trained astronomer.

In order to translate these astronomical indications into a date of the Julian calendar, it is necessary to know what relation the author assumed between the equinoxes, the signs of the zodiac and the calendar. Upon this question the Odes throw no light, and one is forced to resort to conjecture.

The zodiac originated in Babylon prior to 2000 B.C. (Kugler, *Sternkunde*, i, p. 33), and its signs were originally determined by reference to certain constellations. Its position therefore among the stars was fixed. The equinoctial and solstitial points were also believed to occupy fixed positions on the ecliptic, although it is not certain what those positions were. Kugler has discovered in Babylonian tablets of the later age two different positions assigned to the spring equinox, one, between 174 and 151 B.C., at 10° of the Ram, and another, between 103 and 100 B.C., at about 8° . The latter was, he has shown, the position recognized by the Babylonian astronomer Kidinnu, the Kidenas of Greek writers, who was one of the chief sources whence the Greco-Roman world drew its knowledge of Babylonian astronomy.⁶⁹

The early Greek astronomers certainly learned the elements of their science from the Babylonians, but it is impossible to determine the extent of their indebtedness, nor do

⁶⁸ Bouché-Leclercq, *L'Astrologie Grecque*, p. 111, n. 3.

⁶⁹ My information is drawn chiefly from Kugler, *D. babylonische Mondrechnung*, 1900, §§ 37, 60, 61; *Sternkunde u. Sterndienst in Babel*, vol. i, 1907, pp. 25, 28-31, 172-176; vol. ii, 1910-12; *Im Bannkreis Babels*, 1910, pp. 117-126; F. Cumont, *Babylon u. d. gr. Astronomie*, in *N. Jahrb. f. d. kl. Alt.*, 1911; *Astrology and Religion among the Greeks and Romans*, 1912, pp. 58-72.

we know precisely at what point or points on the ecliptic they located the spring equinox. According to Hipparchus (*Comm. in Arat.*, p. 132, 6 Manitius) "all or nearly all the ancient mathematicians" placed it at the beginning of the Ram, yet Eudoxus, he says (*op. cit.*, p. 132, 10), places it in the middle. On the other hand, Columella alleges (*De re rustica*, ix, 14, *ap. Kugler, Mondr.*, p. 105) that Meton and Eudoxus placed it in the eighth degree. At all events, Hipparchus was the first to discover, about 130 B.C., the precession of the equinoxes, and was the first to propose that the position of the zodiac should be determined, not by reference to the fixed stars, but by the spring equinox, that the equinox should always be regarded as the first point of the Ram, and that the zodiac therefore should revolve with the equinox westward among the stars.

Cæsar's reform of the calendar in 45 B.C. seems to have been in more ways than one a compromise measure (Ginzel, *Handb. d. math. u. tech. Chronologie*, ii, pp. 284-5). Acting probably upon the advice of the astronomer Sosigenes, who in turn followed Kidinnu (cf. Pliny, *N.H.*, ii, sq., *ap. Cumont, Bab. u. d. gr. A.*), he decreed that the spring equinox should be fixed in the eighth degree of the Ram, but, in order to bring the position thus assigned into accord with the observed phenomena, he caused the zodiac to be shifted westward far enough to make the eighth degree coincide with the supposed equinoctial point of his own time (so Kugler, *Mondr.*, p. 106). He also decreed that the equinox should fall upon March 25th of the Roman calendar. Cæsar's location of the equinox seems to have been generally accepted by Roman writers for at least 200 years. The eighth degree is recognized by Manilius (iii, 257) and Vitruvius (ix, 3, 3) in the age of Augustus; by Thrasyllus, astronomer to Tiberius (*Cat. Codd. Astr. Graec.*, viii, pt. 3, p. 99); by Columella (xi, 2 and 14) and Pliny (*H.N.*, xviii, 59), in the last half of the first century, and by Vettius Valens in the last half of the second (ix, 11, *ap. Cumont, Bab. u. d. gr. A.*). But about the middle of that century Ptolemy decided in favor of Hipparchus's method, and his

ever growing influence ultimately resulted in the disappearance of that of Sosigenes. In the second century of our era, therefore, both locations of the spring equinox, in the eighth and in the first degree of the Ram, were recognized and may be assumed to have been known to any one even slightly acquainted with astronomy.

As regards the relation of the equinox to the calendar, similar uncertainty prevails. Cæsar had placed it on March 25th. Ptolemy calculated that it fell in 137 A.D. on March 22d (Boeckh, *D. vierjähr. Sonnenkreise d. Alten*, p. 237). It is quite possible that other equivalents were recognized in the numerous local calendars which still survived in the Roman Empire.

The requirement that the morning star must be not less than 15° distant from the sun also admits of a double interpretation. To make sure of a 15° interval between the sun and a star in the first degree, the sun must be in the 17th. But as the 15° requirement is itself arbitrary, it is probable that most persons would have regarded it as satisfied when the sun was in the 16th.

Applying these principles in the data afforded by the Ode :

(1) If the equinox occurs on March 25th in the eighth degree of the Ram, the sun will be in the 16th degree on April 2d.

(2) If it occurs on March 25th in the first degree, the sun will be in the 17th degree on April 10th.

(3) If it occurs on March 22d in the first degree, the sun will be in the 16th degree on April 6th.

The first determination uses the data of the Roman calendar ; the second uses the Hipparchus-Ptolemy zodiac, but accepts the calendar date for the equinox ; the third differs from the second only in substituting Ptolemy's corrected date for the equinox, and in reckoning the interval⁷⁰ as 16 instead of 17 degrees.

⁷⁰ I have assumed, in assigning the above values, that they do not take the precession of the equinoxes into consideration, but assume for the beginning of the Christian era the values recognized at the time the computations were made. The third is in fact by far the most accurate, for March 22d, the

The first is the date calculated by the Roman Hippolytus early in the third century, and is inscribed upon the base of his statue, now in the Lateran Museum.⁷¹ The second precedes by nine months the date assigned the Baptism by the majority of the Basilidean Gnostics in Alexandria about 200 A.D. The third precedes in like manner the date for the Baptism recognized by the minority of the same sect at the same time.⁷²

At a somewhat later period it was assumed by nearly all Christians except the Valentinian and some other Gnostics (Iren. Adv. Haer., I, i, 1; vol. i, p. 12, Harvey; Epiph. Haer. 51, §§ 23, 28) that Christ was baptized on his thirtieth birthday. Valentinus and his school denied it because they wished to represent Christ's entire life on earth as comprising exactly 30 years, to correspond to the 30 æons. Of Basilides' views we know nothing, but, as he did not hold that the æons are exactly 30 in number, he had not that motive for dissenting with Valentinus from the current view. It is therefore probable that Jan. 6th and Jan. 10th are the dates of the Birth as well as of the Baptism, and correspond to April 6th and April 10th as dates for the Annunciation. It is probable that some, at least, of the other dates proposed in the early ages for the leading events in Christ's life were reached by astronomical and astrological calculations. Clement of Alexandria reports (Strom., i, 21;

date assigned by Ptolemy, is nearer the true time of the spring equinox for the first year of our era than for the year 137. The date of the equinox in Babylon for the year 0 may be calculated from Ginzel's table (*op. cit.*, vol. i, p. 101) at 3 h. 43 m. A.M. on March 22d; in 137 A.D. it fell on March 21st. But we cannot credit unknown Gnostics with better astronomical knowledge than the greatest astronomer of his age possessed.

⁷¹ Voigt, *Gesch. Jesu u. d. Astronomie*, p. 89; Hipp., *Opera*, ed. Fabricius, p. 38: *Προ δ' ὃ Νω Ἀπριε γένεσις* Xs. Voigt interprets *γένεσις* as "conception." If it means "birth," which seems to me more probable, the above explanation would still hold, but it would be necessary to assume that Hippolytus supposed the appearance of the star to the Magi to be contemporaneous, not with the Annunciation, but with the Nativity.

⁷² Strom., i, 21, 146 (Stählin, ii, p. 90). *Οἱ δὲ ἀπὸ Βασιλείδου καὶ τοῦ βαπτισματος αὐτοῦ τὴν ἡμέραν ἐορτάζουσι προδιανυκτερεύοντες (ἐν) ἀναγνώσεσι. φασὶ δὲ εἶναι τὸ πεντεκαίδεκατον ἔτος Τιβερίου Καίσαρος τὴν πεντεκαδεκάτην τοῦ Τυβὶ μηνός, τινὲς δὲ αὖ τὴν ἐνδεκάτην τοῦ αὐτοῦ μηνός.*

vol. i, pp. 407, 16–408, 10, Potter) as proposed dates for the Nativity, besides Nov. 18th, which he himself accepts, May 20th (*γένεσις* cannot here mean “conception” I think, but cf. Voigt, p. 86) and April 19th and 20th. The treatise *de Pascha Computus*, ch. 19 (written 243 A.D., see Voigt, n. 300) gives March 28th. Epiphanius speaks of June 20th or May 21st, he seems uncertain which (Haer. 51, 29; ii, 494, 26 Dind.), as proposed in some book he has read. The fact that such computations were employed has long been known and many scholars have endeavored to reconstruct them; but, save in the case of those dates which were coincident with or obviously dependent upon the equinoxes, solstices, and Paschal moon, their efforts have met with little success. It was easy to supply data that would lead to the date given, but not so easy to prove that these were the data used. The 23d Ode gives us for the first time, so far as I have been able to learn, a datum which certainly would have been used — the supposed fact that the Star appeared in the “head of the Wheel.” The remaining data necessary to the solution of the problem are supplied from contemporary practice.

It is well known that Jan. 6th was long celebrated as the anniversary of both the Birth and the Baptism. It was not until the 4th and 5th centuries that a special day, Dec. 25th, was set aside as the festival of the Birth. But it is not definitely known for which of the two events Jan. 6th was originally selected. Conybeare (*Encycl. Brit.*, 11th ed., s.v. *Epiphany*) has adduced much evidence in favor of the view that it was selected for the commemoration of the Baptism solely because a great Egyptian Nile festival was celebrated on that day. But this fails to account for the division of opinion among the Gnostics as between Jan. 6th and Jan. 10th. It is more probable that the dates were originally calculated for the Birth by the methods above suggested, Jan. 10th, to which the majority adhered, being the original determination, Jan. 6th representing a correction based upon Ptolemy's more accurate computation of the current date of the equinox. The interest of the Basilidean and other Gnostics in astrology and astronomy is well known,

and it is not improbable that they were among the first Christians to base such calculations upon the data afforded by the Gospels. Moreover, although the date had been calculated for that of the Birth, they would use it to fix that of the Baptism, and celebrate the latter only, inasmuch as they held that the divine Christ descended upon the man Jesus for the first time at his baptism. Their reasoning, if Hippolytus' account is to be trusted, must have run somewhat as follows: Jesus, no less than common men, was subject to the control of the stars,⁷³ and this was the reason why his conception was attended by such extraordinary phenomena. The Star signified that the great light had descended from the Ogdoad to the Hebdomad (cf. p. 185) and was engaged in the redemption of its inhabitants. From the Ogdoad and the Hebdomad a pneumatic and a "psychic" element descended upon Mary, and Jesus was conceived.⁷⁴ Thereafter everything occurred as narrated in the Gospels. So he was born at the expiration of nine months, on Jan. 10th. On the anniversary of that day he was baptized by John, "and the light which had descended from the Ogdoad above to the Son of the Hebdomad, descended from the Hebdomad upon Jesus, son of Mary, and he was illuminated, being simultaneously enkindled by the light that shone into him."⁷⁵

But the coincidence of the Nile festival with Jan. 6th was no doubt the reason why that date alone, among all its com-

⁷³ Hipp. Ref., vii, 27, p. 376, D. & S.: *ὅτι δὲ, φησὶν, ἕκαστον ἰδίους ἔχει καιρούς, ἱκανὸς ὁ σωτὴρ λέγων. "Οὐπω ἤκει ἡ ὥρα μου," καὶ οἱ μάγοι τὸν ἀστέρα τεθεαμένοι· ἦν γὰρ, φησί, καὶ αὐτὸς ὑπὸ γένεσιν ἀστέρων καὶ ὥρῶν ἀποκαταστάσεως ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ προλελογισμένος σωρῶ.*

⁷⁴ *Op. cit.*, 27, p. 374: *ib.* p. 378: *Ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς γεγέννηται κατ' αὐτοὺς ὡς προειρήκαμεν. Γεγεννημένος δὲ τῆς γενέσεως τῆς προδεδηλωμένης, γέγονε πάντα ὁμοίως κατ' αὐτοὺς τὰ περὶ τοῦ σωτῆρος ὡς ἐν τοῖς εὐαγγελίοις γέγραπται.*

⁷⁵ *Op. cit.*, p. 374: *Κατήλθεν [οὖν] ἀπὸ τῆς ἑβδομάδος τὸ φῶς, τὸ κατελθὸν ἀπὸ τῆς ὀγδοάδος ἀνωθεν τῷ υἱῷ τῆς ἑβδομάδος, ἐπὶ τὸν Ἰησοῦν τὸν υἱὸν τῆς Μαρίας, καὶ ἐφωτίσθη συνεξαφθεὶς τῷ φωτὶ τῷ λάμπαντι εἰς αὐτόν.* Hippolytus' account is obscure, for he proceeds to identify this event with the Annunciation—*τοῦτο ἐστὶ, φησί, τὸ εἰρημένον· "Πνεῦμα ἅγιον ἐπελεύσεται ἐπὶ σέ," τὸ ἀπὸ τῆς υἰότητος διὰ τοῦ μεθορίου πνεύματος ἐπὶ τὴν ὀγδοάδα καὶ τὴν ἑβδομάδα διελθὸν μέχρι τῆς Μαρίας, κτλ.* I have above assumed that both the spiritual and psychic elements, *i.e.* those from the Ogdoad and the Hebdomad, descended upon Mary, and that at the baptism that which descended was the "Sonship" from the highest realms of light.

petitors, survived as a feast of the church. Although first suggested by the Gnostics, it would readily win the favor of Egyptian Christians generally, and the ritual associations of the water festival would aid in keeping it for all what it had been from the beginning for the Gnostics — a commemoration primarily of Jesus' second birth in the water of baptism of the Spirit, and only secondarily of his physical birth of Mary. From Egypt it must have spread rapidly over the Christian world during the third century.

But it must have been in the second century that some speculator, who knew nothing of the Star's alleged appearance in the head of the zodiac, and was not aware that the Roman calendar date for the spring equinox was incorrect even for the first century, concluded that the Annunciation occurred on March 25th and the Nativity on Dec. 25th. The latter date is first suggested in Hippolytus' Commentary on Daniel, about the year 202. If not an interpolation this would indicate that in his earlier years he had held a view which his study of chronology — perhaps of Gnosticism — afterwards led him to change. However that may be, Dec. 25th coincided in Rome with the festival of the winter solstice, the Saturnalia, as Jan. 6th had coincided in Alexandria with the Nile festival. For similar reasons it found favor with the people, and finally, as Rome's ecclesiastical influence spread, came to be generally recognized as the anniversary of the Nativity. But the Annunciation date never attained equal importance. The associations of the festival of the spring equinox had long since been attached to Easter, and although March 25th was and still is recognized by the church calendar as "Lady Day," it has never become as popular a festival as Easter.

Upon similar principles one can explain the curious practice of the church of Edessa in the fourth century. Ephraem celebrated the Annunciation on April 10th, the Nativity on Jan. 6th, two dates not related by the nine months' interval uniformly recognized elsewhere. It is probable⁷⁶ that the

⁷⁶ In Exod. 12 s (Vat. Ed., vol. i, pp. 212-213):

"The lamb is a type (mystery) of our Lord, who on the 10th of Nisan entered into the womb. For from the 10th of the seventh month, when Zacharias

church of Edessa before Ephraem's day had celebrated Jan. 10th and April 10th, and that the first date had been displaced by the more generally recognized festival of Jan. 6th. But April 6th never had been much more than the conjecture of a school, it had never been accepted as a feast day by any large number of Christians, and so had not the power to displace the date already accepted at Edessa.

Of the three indications which the author of Ode XXIII gives of the date for the Annunciation which he has in mind, two, the first and third, connected with the assumption that the morning star must be at least 15° from the sun, enable us to infer with confidence that April 6th, April 10th, and April 2d are among the dates which would satisfy the

was told of the birth of John, to the 10th of the first month, when Mary was told by the angel, is six months. This is the reason why the angel said to her, 'This is the sixth month for her that was called barren.' On the 10th, then, when the lamb was shut up, our Lord was conceived, and on the 14th, when his type was slain, he was crucified." The same idea occurs, although more briefly stated, Hom. in Nat. Dom., iv (vol. ii, p. 415, A-B).

It will be observed that Ephraem ostensibly calculates the date of the Annunciation from that of Zacharias' vision. But Luke does not in any way indicate the day of the latter, and it is much more probable that the inference ran in the other direction. Ephraem, nevertheless, celebrated the Nativity on Jan. 6th. This is made quite certain by a passage in Hom., iv, in Nat. Dom. (Vat. Ed., vol. ii, p. 415 A):

"The Luminary has conquered and has expressed the type by the degrees he has ascended. It is twelve days since he ascended, and to-day is the thirteenth—a perfect type of the birth of the Son and his Twelve."

The "ascension" of the sun can be nothing but the winter solstice, when he begins to climb from his southernmost point northwards, and Jan. 6th is the thirteenth day from Dec. 25th, the calendar date for the solstice. Epiphanius quotes Ephraem to the same effect, although not in quite the same words, Haer. 51 (ii, 482, 27, Dind.). But in Hom. in Nat. iii. (vol. ii, p. 407 A) he says:

"In December (?) when the seed is hidden in the earth, there sprouted from the womb an ear of life; in April, when the seed is sprouting in the air, a sheaf sowed itself in the earth." The word here used for December, is also used, with the qualification "second," as the name of January. In view of the preceding passage, we must suppose that Ephraem feels at liberty to use it in the less common sense when speaking of a topic with regard to which his hearers could not misunderstand him. Both Morris and Benedictus translate it "December"; Morris renders "Nisan" "March"; Benedictus, "vere novo."

conditions. The second indication, the assembling of the planets, affords some ground, although not a conclusive one, for supposing that April 10th is the date contemplated in the Ode.

Ignatius describes the sun, moon, and constellations as forming a "chorus" about the Star; Ode XXII refers to the assembling of the "regions of the midst"; the Acts of Judas Thomas to the assembling of the "worlds." What is the origin and significance of this conception? The passage in the Acts might, perhaps, be explained as an allusion to the appearance of the angels to the shepherds, but the other three cannot. Ignatius speaks, not of angels but of stars; the "Places," the "regions of the midst" are quite certainly, and the "worlds" are probably, the Gnostic equivalents of the stars—the spirits of the stellar regions. Again, did Ignatius really believe that the stars of heaven left their places and gathered about the Star of Bethlehem? If so, how did he explain the silence of history?

There is one simple and natural explanation, which has already been suggested by Professor Voigt⁷⁷ as the source of Ignatius' conception.

In April of 6 B.C. the seven planets were in fact assembled within 50° of one another in the zodiac. Such a phenomenon might have escaped mention in history, but it could not have escaped the attention of astronomers and must have been known to those of more than one succeeding century. It is also quite certain that Christian astronomers would have tried to connect so astonishing a phenomenon, occurring not long before Christ's birth, with the Gospel story of the Star. In the passages quoted we have, I think, the vestiges of such speculations.

Similar speculations were advanced in the seventeenth century by Kepler. On Sept. 26, 1604, Mars and Saturn were in conjunction in Sagittarius; on Oct. 9, Mars and Jupiter were in conjunction; on Oct. 10, a new and brilliant star appeared close to the two planets. This phenomenon, which excited the liveliest interest among the astronomers and as-

⁷⁷ *Gesch. Jesu u. d. Astr.*, p. 125.

trologers of the time, suggested to Kepler a new explanation of the Gospel story of the Star of Bethlehem and the visit of the Magi. His calculations led him to believe that in June, August, and December of the year 7 B.C., Saturn and Jupiter were in conjunction in the Fishes; that in February of 6 B.C. Saturn and Mars were in conjunction in the Fishes; and in March, Jupiter and Mars in the Ram. He proposed the theory that a new star had appeared then, as in 1604, and that the Magi, interpreting the extraordinary conjunctions and the appearance of the new star in accordance with the usual rules of astrology, were able to infer the birth of the King of the Jews.

The downfall of astrology threw Kepler's theory into oblivion, but its leading feature has since awakened renewed interest. Many writers have maintained that, although no new star appeared, the conjunctions of 7 B.C. or of 6 B.C. were themselves the occasion of the story of the coming of the Magi. Some hold that the story is true, although the author of the Gospel has misunderstood the occasion of their journey; others that the whole tale is a legend suggested by the fact, then of course well known, that such conjunctions had taken place about the time of the birth of Christ.

In recent years discussion of the subject has been revived, especially in Germany, where several books and articles have appeared in which the available evidence is adduced and sifted. The latest of these, from which my own knowledge of the subject is chiefly derived, is Prof. H. G. Voigt's *Die Geschichte Jesu und die Astrologie* (Leipzig, Hinrichs, 1911). He gives a full and valuable review of the literature and endeavors to prove that the grouping of the planets, about April 14, 6 B.C., would, if interpreted by the ordinary rules of astrology, have led the Magi to infer the birth of a personage of importance who might fairly be described as King of the Jews.⁷⁸

⁷⁸ In some reviews of Professor Voigt's book, the fact that he believes the visit of the Magi really took place, seems to be regarded as a sufficient reason for discrediting his argument, a method of criticism which quite mistakes the point at issue. If he is right in his contention, a serious objection to the

The conjunction of Saturn and Jupiter in 7 B.C. took place, according to Ideler, in May, October, and December, and are therefore excluded by the dates implied in the Ode. Kritzingen has recently calculated that on March 21, 7 B.C., Jupiter rose before sunrise, and on March 31, Saturn in conjunction with Mercury rose in like manner.⁷⁹ This again does not correspond with the date indicated by the Ode. But the situation of the planets in April, 6 B.C., described by Voigt (*op. cit.*, pp. 13, 177, and chart at end) and based upon Neubauer's calculations, constituted a veritable "assembling." On the morning of April 14, about 45 minutes before sunrise, Mars was below the horizon in the thirtieth degree of the Ram, the sun, probably with Mercury, about the twenty-second degree, Jupiter just on the horizon in the tenth degree, Saturn in the first degree, at the equinoctial point, Venus at about the nineteenth, and the moon at about the twelfth degree of the Fishes. Thus all seven planets were grouped around the equinoctial point within a space of only 50°, and four of them were visible above the horizon in the eastern sky within the first third of the distance from the horizon to the zenith.

The four days' discrepancy between the date calculated by Neubauer, April 14th, and the date which I have inferred from the indications afforded by the Ode, April 10th, is not of material importance. Granting that Neubauer's calculations are correct, — a matter upon which I can form no

historical character of the account in Matthew is removed ; but the event itself remains unsupported by other evidence than that of the Gospel. Professor Voigt is undoubtedly right in maintaining that the conjunctions of 7 B.C. and 6 B.C. must have awakened intense interest among the astrologers of that age, precisely as those of 1603 and 1604 did among their successors, and there can be no theoretical objection to the effort to determine what interpretation they might have put upon it. But it is not probable that the results attained by any one investigator will command the assent of many others. We know practically nothing of the methods used in practice by astrologers of Persia and Babylonia in the first century B.C., and such evidence as we do possess shows that even at a much later period independent and conflicting systems were in simultaneous use. There is certainly little hope of ascertaining what construction the Magi would have placed upon the phenomena in question.

⁷⁹ Voigt, *op. cit.*, p. 12.

opinion,—an astrologer of the second century who knew that this remarkable assembling of the stars took place about the time of the spring equinox, shortly before Christ's birth, and who accepted the story of the appearance of the Star, would almost certainly have inferred that the Star must have appeared in the first degree of the Ram, and would probably have inferred that the sun was 15° distant, whether the data before him did or did not warrant the assumption. Ample proof of this assertion may be found in Bouché-Leclercq's illustrations of the astrologer's habitual disregard of even the most evident astronomical facts when they came in conflict with the principles of astrology. But it is also possible that the evidence before the writer indicated April 10th as the day in question ; or failed to indicate the date with precision.

The conclusions I have reached may be resumed as follows: Odes XXIII, XXII, VII, and XXXIX involve conceptions closely akin to those the existence of which, in Odes XIX, XXIV, and XIII, I endeavored in my former paper to prove and in substance identical with those of many Gnostic schools. Christ descends from heaven to earth; passes through intermediate regions of the spiritual world; encounters their inhabitants, who desire but are not permitted to know his nature and his mission; assumes dominion, upon reaching the region of the planets, over the spirits that have hitherto through the planets ruled our world, and receives their homage. He is conceived in Ode VII as a being of brilliant light and his path is described as marked by a trail of light leading from the highest heaven to earth, whereby we also are enabled to find our way from earth to heaven. In Ode XXXIX the dangers of the intermediate regions are described as "rivers" and Christ's path as a "bridge" that enables us to cross over them. The homage of the star-spirits is described in Ode XXIII as an "assembling of the Places," in Ode XXII as an "assembling of the regions between" or "of the Midst"; it is to be identified with the "assembling of the worlds" mentioned in the Acts of Judas Thomas, with the "chorus of the stars"

of Ignatius and, in all probability, with the assemblage of all seven planets within 50° around the equinoctial point which actually took place in the second week of April of 6 B.C. The "Star in the east" is supposed to appear in the "head" of the "wheel" of the zodiac, the sign of the Ram, soon after the sun has passed through the Fishes, and it is probably supposed to be visible as a morning star. Supplying from computations known to have found acceptance in the second century the data necessary to the determination of a date, three dates are reached which satisfy the conditions, April 2, 6, and 10. All, or their correlative dates for the Birth and Baptism, are known to have been proposed before 200 A.D. April 10 is approximately consistent with the assembling of the planets, and is probably the date contemplated by the Ode. It is also the date accepted for the Annunciation in Ephraem's day by the church of Edessa, although it was inconsistent with the date of the Nativity then accepted by the same church—Jan. 6th. This suggests that it is a survival of an earlier local usage. It is probable that these astronomical and astrological speculations originated among the Syrian Gnostics, about the end of the first or the beginning of the second century, possibly in the school of Saturnilus, the first distinctively Christian Gnostic, who flourished at Antioch and was probably contemporary with Ignatius, the Bishop of Antioch, and with Basilides, who is said to have taught in Alexandria.

Nov. 11, 1912.

Brief Communications

HEB. מִכָּר, ABUNDANCE

ON page 116 I have stated that we ought to read in Psalm 90 14 שְׁבַעֵנוּ בְּכֶר חֶסֶד instead of שְׁבַעֵנוּ בְּכֶר חֶסֶד. It might be well to add that we find the same corruption in Psalm 143 8, where we ought to read הַשְׁבִּיעֵנִי חֶסֶד בְּכֶר חֶסֶד instead of הַשְׁמִיעֵנִי בְּכֶר חֶסֶד. Also in Psalm 59 17 we may substitute חֶסֶד לְכֶר for וְאֶרְנֶן לְכֶר (for ל cf. Psalm 95 1). The reading בְּכֶר חֶסֶד may be influenced by Psalm 92 3 where בְּכֶר חֶסֶד is, of course, correct.

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